

Winchester Cyclist Count: Winter 2022

Carried out by Cycle Winchester

Key Facts

- **We counted cyclists at 10 locations around the city between 8am and 10am in effect on a single, cold February weekday morning.**
- **There were 231 cycle movements in the hour before 9am, 124 cycle movements in the hour after 9am.**
- **Busiest locations were North Walls, College Street, Worthy Road and Stockbridge Road.**
- **Least busy locations were the City Bridge, lower Romsey Road and upper Romsey Road.**
- **1 in 7 of the cyclists on North Walls were trying to go the 'wrong' way, indicating a lack of safer, more legal options.**

Introduction

Cycle Winchester is concerned about a lack of useful (or public) data related to cycle use in the city.

Hampshire County Council and Winchester City Council both have transport and climate change strategies that aim to increase levels of cycling. However there seems to be inadequate baseline data by which success could be measured.

Bike sensors are in use around the city but there are doubts about their accuracy and about how well they can capture the complexity of cycle movements at any given point.

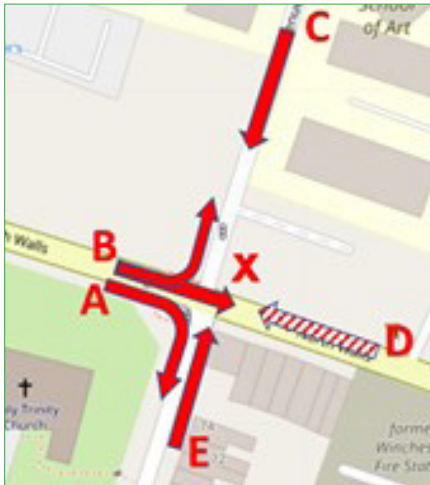
A Winchester *Cycle Parking Survey* already exists which has collected valuable data over many years. This study looks instead at cyclists on the roads and the routes they use and is intended to complement the cycle parking data. The intention is to monitor levels of cycling at specific locations on a regular basis: winter and summer.

Methodology

CW identified 10 sampling points around the city where, at each, a single count was carried out between 8am and 10am on a midweek morning – avoiding school holidays except in one instance. The count dates were between 19th January 2022 and 25th February 2022 and are taken to be indicative of *winter cycling levels*. In all cases counts were taken on dry days, but often in grey, windy and bleak conditions with temperatures ranging between 2C and 10C. It is assumed that anyone out at such a time could effectively be considered a *year-round cyclist*.

The counts are separated into 8am–9am and 9am–10am slots as there was usually a significant drop between those times. The earlier period can be loosely indicative of a peak hourly level as it includes commuting to work and school whilst the later period can be loosely indicative of a likely steady-state rate through the day.

At each sampling point, data was typically split into five categories, noting the direction of entry into a junction/node and for the most important entry discriminating between exit routes. An example is shown below for North Walls. In this case, it should be noted that D is not currently a legal cycling route, hence the hachured arrow.



A: North Walls: Right turn Middle Brook Street

B: North Walls: Left turn Park Avenue

C: Park Avenue southbound

D: North Walls westbound

E: Middle Brook Street northbound

The count also recorded *standard v non-standard* bikes separately, where non-standard indicated a trike, trailer bike, cargo bike or significant load-carrying facility. In retrospect this was not seen as an especially helpful categorisation and future counts intend to record *e-bikes v non-e-bikes* instead.

Results

The map overleaf shows the ten data count locations along with the cycle movements per hour for pre 9am (top figure) and post 9am (bottom figure).

Although these counts were taken on different days they can be taken as a snapshot of a single winter morning.

The total *movements per hour* pre 9am were **231**.

The total *movements per hour* post 9am were **124**.

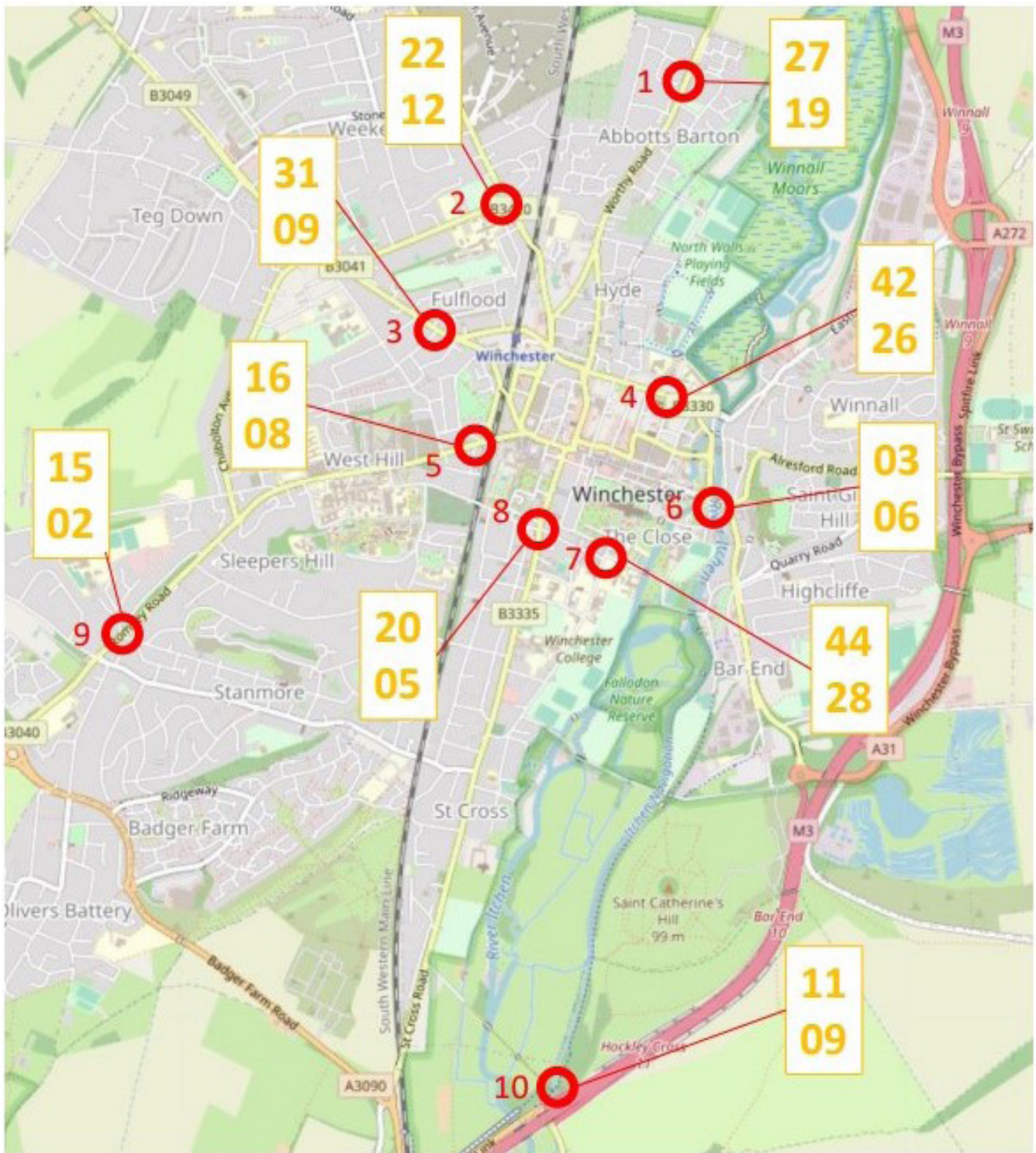
Some of the movements recorded will duplicate a single cyclist either on a return journey through the same location or on a route that passes through more than one count. On the other hand, this is far from an exhaustive survey of cyclists on the streets of Winchester – it is simply a count at ten discrete locations.

Discussion

This is the beginning of a study, establishing a baseline of cycling activity. Nevertheless, there are some important points that emerge even from this ‘first look’.

More than 350 cycle journeys recorder over a couple of hours on a winter morning is a significant level of activity; especially when remembering that this is far from being a comprehensive picture. Cyclists are not a tiny minority whose needs can be easily ignored. And our authorities should be encouraged to imagine how large the numbers on bikes would be *if cycling could be made safe and easy*. It was noticeable how many of these cyclists (fairly brave in the first place to be out and about at this time of year) resorted to pushing bikes or using pavements to maintain safety.

It is worth adding a small piece of anecdotal evidence to reinforce the point about safety. When recording at City Bridge a cyclist emerged from the Viaduct Route, struggled to cross the road and pushed his bike along the pavement towards Water Lane. Unprompted and with no visible sign that our data recorder was a cyclist the man shouted out a couple of times across the road, ‘it’s lethal, it’s lethal!’ Crossing to talk to him it turned out he was



1 Worthy Road (Stoke Rd/Dyson Dv)	2 Andover Road (Bereweek Rd)	3 Stockbridge Road (Western Rd)	4 North Walls (Park Av/M Brook St)	5 Lr Romsey Road (Clifton Terrace)
6 City Bridge (NCN23)	7 Kingsgate Street (College St)	8 St Cross Road (Canon St)	9 Ur Romsey Road (Battery Hill)	10 NCN23 (Five Bridges Rd)

returning home from an early shift. Going to work at 5am was fine. But every day when he thought about his journey home, he dreaded crossing City Bridge. It is incredibly busy and often drivers accelerated towards him to stop him getting across. He didn't dare cycle the few yards to Water Lane and always hoped there wouldn't be a pedestrian coming the other way on a very narrow pavement. If we talked to the other 350 cyclists doubtless there would be many similar stories. Most people are cycling *in spite of* everything.

In relation to the point above it is quite noticeable how much higher the levels of cycling are where routes are more welcoming and traffic levels are lower eg around Kingsgate Street and the Park Avenue/Middle Brook Street axis. Of course, these are flatter routes too, but this is less of an issue now with e-bikes. It suggests, for instance, that the NCN23 from the south has potential to be much more frequented if it had better access from Twyford, Otterbourne, Colden Common, Compton and South Winchester Park & Ride. And it sends the more general message that where traffic levels are low, and people feel safe, they are very happy to get on a bike.

The data for individual routes at each location shows that cyclists on the main radial roads into town aren't always the dominant feature of any count. For instance, out of 24 cycle movements at Romsey Road/St James Terrace intersection only 25% of the cyclists were heading down the Romsey Road into the city centre. And at Stockbridge Road/Western Road/St Paul's Hill junction only 35% of the cyclists came down Stockbridge Road. It reinforces one of the concerns that Cycle Winchester has with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which is the network template for cycling developments into the future. The

LCWIP focuses on a few radial routes (not always particularly well) and completely ignores secondary routes that traverse the city. Cyclists need a web of routes not a few isolated arteries.

The data count also indicates *desire lines* – routes that cyclists actually want to take – being the easiest, safest and most practical way from A to B. Automatic data counters wouldn't record the fact that 6 cyclists in just one hour created their own 'illegal' contraflow on North Walls (Route D in the diagram above) even though it meant using a narrow pavement and some of them pushing their bike. Currently there is no reasonable alternative. It makes a very strong case for a route to be negotiated through the Winchester School of Art that connects Wales Street to Park Avenue.

Conclusion

It is salutary to spend two hours during the early morning observing travel patterns at various locations around the city. It is impossible to miss the extent to which, despite all the rhetoric, pedestrians and cyclists are still treated as second-class citizens.

Watching pedestrians bunched up together on narrow, fume-filled street corners waiting patiently for a gap in a stream of cars is the clearest possible indication that Winchester has got its transport priorities completely wrong. And watching cyclists choosing to push their bikes up narrow pavements against the traffic flow sends the same message. There are many straightforward measures that would immediately begin the process of change, not least more shared (Toucan) road crossings and a city-wide 20mph limit that is strictly enforced.

There are far too few cyclists coming into the city along our radial routes. The roads are too busy and there is no real accommodation of the cyclist. Admittedly it was on a day during the Wellhouse Lane closure but whilst noting a total of 27 cycle movements at the Worthy Road/Dyson Drive/Stoke Road location between 8am and 9am there were an estimated 700 inbound cars.

On the other hand, there are a good number of cyclists making cross city journeys on quieter routes. At the moment they are doing it in an ad-hoc fashion often with inconvenient dismounts, occasional use of pavements and awkward crossings. Work is needed to develop a coherent network that allows this activity to flourish and become the predominant way that Winchester residents travel from one part of the city to another.